



**DIOCESE OF FALL RIVER**  
CHANCERY OFFICE  
**OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

Bulletin points from the Office of Safe Environment:

1. *See that you do not despise one of these little ones,\* for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. Matthew 18:10*

Did you know...

April is both Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Child abuse can occur in every culture, religion, and socio-economic demographic. The vast majority of child abuse occurs at the hands of someone known to the child victim. Those who seek to do harm to children will pursue opportunities that provide access to children and may appear to be helpful and friendly. Our Diocesan policy of the **Essential Three** requires that all who minister work, or volunteer in the Diocese complete background screening, training and agree to a code of conduct. This is one of the ways we endeavor to educate our parish and school communities and create a culture of child protection.

2. Did you know....

Research estimates 1 in 6 children will experience online sexual abuse before the age of 18 (Crimes Against Children Research Center 2022). As parents and caregivers, we must remain vigilant and involved in our children's online worlds. Want to know more? Visit <https://protectyoungeyes.com/>

3. What is *Circle of Grace*?

One of the ways our parish creates a culture of protection is by teaching the *Circle of Grace* safe environment curriculum to all enrolled in Faith Formation and Youth Ministry programs and to the students in our Catholic Schools. In an age-appropriate manner, *Circle of Grace* teaches children and youth personal safety skills including recognizing physical, emotional and spiritual boundaries, identifying trusted adults, and taking action if boundary violations occur.

4. Did you know...

All members of the clergy, Directors of Religious Education and teachers in our schools are Mandated Reporters in Massachusetts and required by law to report any suspected child abuse. Many children will not tell anyone they are being abused. Because the Diocese believes in our moral obligation to protect children, we extend the safe environment training to all who minister, work or volunteer. Watch for signs of abuse and, if you are concerned about a child, share those concerns with a mandated reporter at your parish or school. Let us all be a voice for children who may not be able to speak for themselves.

5. The Diocese of Fall River stands firm in its commitment to report abuse to law enforcement and cooperate with investigations. If you have been abused by someone representing the Church (priest, deacon, religious, employee or volunteer), we are sorry. We are here to listen and support you. You can report an incident of abuse by contacting local law enforcement directly and by contacting Diocesan Director of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance, Carolyn Shipp at 508-985-6508 (confidential voice mail) or [cshipp@dioc-fr.org](mailto:cshipp@dioc-fr.org). She can assist you in making a report and support you through the process.

6. Did you know...

Pope Francis recently updated and made permanent his motu proprio *Vos estis lux mundi* (You are the light of the world). In May 2019, Pope Francis established new norms regarding the requirement to ensure adequate processing of reports of sexual abuse by priests or members of religious life. The new document makes permanent these important protections for those reporting abuse and holds Church leaders accountable for any failures to carry out their responsibilities in this regard.

Much of what is outlined in *Vos estis lux mundi*, has been in place in the United States since 2002 with the establishment of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (Dallas Charter) The Charter created a set of procedures for handling allegations of sexual abuse of a minor, whether historical or current. It calls for all allegations to be reported to local law enforcement, zero tolerance for clergy with credible allegations returning to ministry, and establishment of outreach and healing services for survivors.